

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Colorado River Basin



April 2017 Executive Officer's Report

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Activities and Events Hosted by Region 7:

- April 5th—The Assistant Executive Officer, Ms. Jernegan, and Ms. Castaneda met with several Niland residents who are complaining that Niland Sanitary District is overcharging sewer fees and mismanaging its finances. Staff is discharging the complaints to the appropriate agencies for follow up.
- April 20th and 21st—Region 7 hosted the Deputy Management Committee meeting.
- April 26th—Doug Wylie and Jeff Geraci participated in this monthly meeting of the Natural Resources Agency's Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) Long-Range Planning Committee meeting. Approximately 30-40 people attended the meeting. The meeting focused on several presentations provided by consultants on financing the State's SSMP 10-year plan and dust mitigation.

New River Pollution from Mexico

- April 14th—Chair Wright and Jose Angel met with CalEPA Deputy Secretary Alexa Kleysteuber to discuss New River pollution from Mexico and what should be done to eliminate bypasses of raw sewage from Mexicali into the New River. [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]
- April 19th—Chair Wright, the AEO, and the EO attended a meeting with representatives from the USEPA, US IBWC, State Department, NADBank/BECC, and CalEPA in San Francisco to discuss Mexico's bypasses of raw sewage into the New River and request that the federal government take action to eliminate the bypasses. Chair Wright directed staff to work closely with the NADBank/BECC and federal and state representatives and coordinate with Mexico to assist Mexico in putting together a proposal for binational funding to acquire equipment to eliminate the bypasses. [*Frank Gonzalez, P.E.*]
- April 21st—Jose Angel briefed Imperial County and representatives of Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella) and Senator Ben Hueso (D-Chula Vista) about the New River policy meeting held in San Francisco. [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]
- April 26th—Jose Angel attended a meeting of the US IBWC Colorado River Citizen Forum in El Centro to update the forum on the New River Improvement Project and New River pollution from Mexico. [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]

Groundwater Protection Activities

- April 13th—Regional Water Board staff attended a meeting on April 13th with the Twentynine Palms Water District (District) and its consultant, Kennedy/Jenks, to discuss SNMP development specifically, staff's comments on the Water District's proposed SNMP, future work, and the timeline for SNMP completion. Attendees included Mary Serra, Joan Stormo and Cathy Sanford from the Regional Water Board, Ray Koliz with the Twentynine Palms Water District, and Ryan Huston and Eddy Teasdale, Kennedy/Jenks consultants. During the meeting, Regional Water Board staff expressed the following concerns about the proposed SNMP:
 - The plan needs to be finalized and reviewed/updated on a regular basis (every three to five years). Additional groundwater data are needed to further assess, analyze, monitor and evaluate current groundwater conditions. Staff also recommended the District collaborate with the Marine Base to fund a USGS groundwater study.
 - The SNMP lacks an adequate strategy to control identified sources of salt and nutrient loading (mainly septic system effluents), and lacks a schedule to implement groundwater monitoring activities.
 - The need to phase out wastewater discharges from on-site systems need to be eliminated. Staff recommends the Water District collaborate with the City and the Marine Base to expand/upgrade the wastewater collection system at the Base to accommodate the City's waste, populated in large part by military personnel. An expansion/upgrade is necessary given the history of violations at the Military Base's wastewater treatment facility, and the well documented threat septic system discharges pose to groundwater.

In response to these concerns, the Water District agreed to increase sampling frequency of the existing production wells from every three years to every year, and to establish a water quality monitoring network using existing wells that includes an implementation plan with a detailed schedule. Additionally, the District will install new monitoring wells (as funding allows), to assess the shallow aquifer and vertical mixing within the aquifer, and develop an outreach program that describes the objectives of the monitoring program to facilitate accessing and sampling private groundwater wells. Staff intends to conduct regular meetings with the District to facilitate/expedite the development of the final SNMP. If the SNMP effort fails to progress, staff may recommend a prohibition of wastewater discharges for the City of Twentynine Palms. *[Joan Stormo, P.G., Unit Chief]*

- April 18th—Regional Water Board staff attended a meeting organized by the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Coachella Valley District (CVWD) regarding the proposed scope of work for Project to recharge groundwater in the Coachella Valley. In March 2015, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received a Right of Way (ROW) Permit application from Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) for the Whitewater Groundwater Replenishment Facility, portions of which are located on public lands. CVWD is requesting to renew and amend the BLM ROW Permit to use the formerly permitted area (509 acres) as well as additional area (431 acres) for access, operation and maintenance of groundwater replenishment activities using Colorado River water delivered to the replenishment facility through the Colorado River Aqueduct Turnout. CVWD also proposes to increase the amount of Colorado River water recharged at the facility from a historical average of 67,360 acre feet per year (af/yr) to 511,000 af/yr. This proposal qualifies as a “Project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The BLM, as the lead agency, invited agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise to participate in the meeting. Attendees included Brandon Anderson and Janet Cheek of BLM; Luke Stowe, Elizabeth Meyerhoff, Steve Bigley, Chris Bogon, and Carrie Oliphant of CVWD; Catherine Munson of Kilpatrick Townsend; Sarah Rapolla, Mark Krause, and David Tate of Desert Water Authority (DWA); John Rydzik and Ollie Beyal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); and Cathy Sanford, Joan Stormo, and Mary Serra of the Regional Water Board. During the meeting, Board staff emphasized the to prevent or significantly reduce adverse water quality impacts on the groundwater basin by revising the project and implementing feasible alternatives or mitigation measures when significant environmental effects of the project are disclosed. BLM and CVWD are planning to submit the notice of intent in October 2017 and conduct scoping meetings in November and December 2017. Regional Water Board staff is presently providing written comments on the Project to BLM and CVWD. *[Joan Stormo, P.G., Unit Chief]*

Other Policy and Program Meetings

- April 6th—Jose Angel, Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, and Loagn Raub meet with representatives from Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Imperial County Farm Bureau (Bureau) to discuss implementation of the Ag Waiver for agricultural runoff from the Imperial Valley. Issues discussed included applicability of the Waiver and its associated fees. *[Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, PhD, Unit Chief]*
- April 14th—Chair Wright and the EO attended the Chairs’ meeting in Sacramento. Undersecretary Burns and representatives from the Governor’s Office briefed the attendees on the Administration’s priorities, including management of the Salton Sea. Other issues discussed during the meeting include Budget Change Proposals, innovative monitoring and surveillance technologies, and ways to improve coordination between the Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board. The Chairs directed the EOs to form a workgroup to follow up and report back with recommendations of innovative monitoring and surveillance technologies. *[Jose L. Angel, P.E.]*
- April 19th and 20th—Maria Davydova attended the TMDL RoundTable meeting in Sacramento. Key topics discussed at the meeting included: Program updates from USEPA, Regional Water Boards, and State Water Board representatives; GIS mapping for groundwater basins and Basin Planning; and pesticide policy. There was also a field trip to the Nimbush Fish Hatchery. *[Maria Davydova, ES]*

- April 20th and 21st—Deputy Management Committee meeting. The Regional Water Boards AEOs and State Water Board Assistant Deputies and Offices’ Directors met in the Palm Desert office. Key issues discussed during the meeting including Water Boards Budget, status of the Enforcement Policy Update, status of the Cannabis General Order, the State Water Board Source Water Protection Plan, discretionary contracts, the Water Boards Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program, and the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. [*Frank Gonzalez, P.E.*]
- April 26th—Jose Angel met with Ms. Alejandra Nunez (Project Manager for the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and Ms. Esperanza Colio (Manager Imperial County Economic Development Department) in El Centro to discuss projects in Imperial County that the BECC should prioritize for funding for the upcoming federal fiscal year, including funding a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system for the Palo Verde community and rehabilitating a sewer main for Winterhaven. Ms. Nunez and Mr. Angel also met with Armando Villa (Calexico City Manager) in Calexico to discuss the City’s water and wastewater priorities.
- April 26th—Doug Wylie and Jose Cortez met with consultants regarding permitting a proposed medical marijuana cultivation facility in the City of Desert Hot Springs. The proponent of the project proposes to construct an industrial park that houses facilities for the indoor cultivation of medical marijuana on a 9.7 acre site. The development will include 17, two-story buildings with approximately 310,000 sf of building area. Once a complete application for the project’s proposed discharge of wastewater is submitted by the Discharger, Regional Water Board staff will be providing the Board with a recommendation on how to regulate this discharge.
- April 28th—Jose Angel met with representatives of One World Beef Packers at the beef plant in Brawley to discuss Quality Assurance issues, the Waste Discharge Requirements for the beef plant, and the effluent monitoring results for the plant.
- April 29th—Doug Wylie participated in a public meeting with the Palo Verde County Water District’s Board and Imperial County staff from the Public Works and Community & Economic Developments. The Palo Verde Lagoon and Palo Verde Drain that flow through the unincorporated community of Palo Verde and have been listed as impaired water bodies for pathogens under Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. The community is around the Lagoon and relies of individual septic systems for treatment and disposal of their domestic wastewater. The District, with the assistance of County of Imperial, has completed the process for the formation of a sewer district for the community of Palo Verde. The District has also applied to the NADBank/BECC for grant funds for the construction of a centralized community wastewater collection and treatment system. The purpose of the April 27 meeting was to encourage property owners to enter into a covenant and agreement for connection to the centralized wastewater collection and treatment system once it becomes available. [*Doug Wylie, P.E., Unit Chief*]

Board Workshops

- April 17th—The Regional Water Board held a Basin Plan Triennial Review Workshop. During the workshop, Board staff presented an overview of the Triennial Review process and a preliminary list of issues that should be part of the 2017 Triennial Review. Regional Water Board members directed staff to also address the septic systems in the Coachella Valley as part of the Review. Based on the directive and other stakeholder input, staff is preparing a revised list of Triennial Review issues, which will be presented at the September 2017 Board meeting in Palm Desert. [*Nadim-Shukry Zeyway, PhD, Senior ES*]

Outreach and Education Activities

- April 29th—Ms. Maria Davydova represented the Regional Water Board at Earth Day in Brawley. The event was organized by Comite Civico del Valle., and it featured a clean-up activity by high school volunteers, combined with a 3-hour outreach exhibit period. There were over 80 registered clean-up

volunteers, over 20 exhibitors, and a quite number of other community members attending the event, including families with young children. *[Maria Davydova, ES]*

Ms. Davydova participated in the outreach period with a Water Boards exhibit table. She shared the following items at the event:

- Citizen's Guide to working with California Water Boards (English only)
- Kids drought cootie catchers in English and Spanish
- Kids Stormwater info bookmark in English and Spanish
- HS-level Common Urban Runoff Pollutants brochure (staff combined and printed out seven pages prepared by OPP)
- Water Boards pencils

She also spoke with a few dozen attendees to explain what the Regional and State Water Boards do, what area is covered by the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Board, and to explain stormwater runoff. *[Maria Davydova, ES]*

Management Meetings

- Regional Water Board Executive staff and supervisors met weekly throughout April 2017. The main issues discussed during the meetings included status of workload commitments and Board priorities, upcoming Board meetings and workshops, vacancies, and staff's performance appraisals for FY 2016-17. *[Frank Gonzalez, P.E., AEO]*

Environmental Justice

- April 20th—Jose Figueroa-Acevedo represented the Board at the Imperial Valley Environmental Task Force meeting in El Centro. The main topics discussed during the meeting were air pollution problems in the Imperial Valley and Ecozone, a proposed industrial development in the southwest of Mexicali, near Mount Signal (a.k.a. El Centinela). *[Jose Figueroa-Acevedo, WRCE]*
- April 26th—Ms. Maria Davydova represented the Board the Eastern Coachella Valley Environmental Task Force meeting in Indio. Key topics discussed during the meeting included the Salton Sea Management Program, complains about dumping of trash at I-10 and Exit 173 and 43rd Avenue in Indio, and the April 29th Earth Day event sponsored by Comité Civico del Valle. *[Maria Davydova, ES]*

Staff Training and Professional Development

- On April 6th—Hamid Foolad of the State Water Board's provided a one-day overview of the GeoTracker database to all Groundwater Protection Division staff at the Board office. The training was arranged by Division Chief Mary Serra. GeoTracker is the Water Boards' data management system for sites that impact groundwater or have the potential to impact groundwater. GeoTracker also provides a public access through its Document Manager Module of over 350,000 documents, including regulatory communication with responsible parties, regulatory actions such as records of decision documents, and all data and documents submitted by the responsible party using Business to Government Reporting Module for Electronic Submission of Information (ESI). *[Mary Serra, P.E., Supervising WRCE]*
- April 26-28th—Regional Water Board staff attended the California Water Environment Association (CWEA) Annual Conference, which was held in the Palm Springs Convention Center. Regional Water Board staff presented one the Conference's modules on "How to Manage a Stormwater MS4 Program in a Desert Region" on April 26, 2017. *[Jeong-Hee Lim, Ph.D., P.E.; Kai Dunn, Ph.D., P.E.]*
- All of the Regional Water Board technical staff are current with their Health and Safety training requirements for field work.
- April 27th - Regional Board staff attended Fluvial Geomorphology *[Kai Dunn, Senior WRCE]*
- April 27th – Regional Board staff attended the 40-Hour Hazwoper *[Juan Lezo, WRCE]*

- April 27th – Regional Board staff attended the Aquatic Delineation for WBs [*Mary Serra, P.E., Supervising WRCE*]

Other Events

- April 5th—Regional Water Board staff conducted a routine inspection of the One World Beef Packers plant in Brawley. [*Jose Figueroa-Acevedo, WRCE*]
- April 13th—Mr. Lars Siefert submitted his letter of resignation from the Regional Water Board. Mr. Seifert relocated to the San Diego area to accept a position with San Diego County.
- April 26th—Regional Board staff collected water quality samples in the New River at the International Boundary for delivery at a local laboratory for analyses. [*Abid Khalaf, WRCE, and Carlos Angulo, WRCE*]
- April 18th—Regional Water Board staff celebrated Ms. Maribel Jernegan’s birthday with a cake and refreshments in the office lunch room. [*Mary Castaneda, AGPA*]
- April 13th—A new contractor was contacted and came in to review the scope of work needed for Board room improvements. They will meet with our DIT staff on May 11th to go over logistics, and to provide us with a final estimate. The previous contractors were not able to commit to this project. [*Mary Castaneda, AGPA*]

Office Visitors and Public Records Act Request

- April 2017 —Regional Water Board staff processed 5 Public Records Act Request [*Soni Wells, AGPA*]
- April 2017 —Regional Water Board staff assisted 37 visitors [*Terry Barnes, OT*]

Upcoming Policy Meetings/Activities

- May 18th—CalEPA Deputy Secretary Alexa Kleysteuber and other CalEPA staff will be visiting Imperial Valley to discuss with Imperial County, Imperial Irrigation District, City of Calexico and Regional Water Board representatives entering into a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the New River Improvement Project recommended infrastructure for the New River in Calexico.
- May 22-23rd—The Management Coordinating Committee will be meeting in Sacramento. Meeting topics include the Water Board’s budget, statewide vacancies, statewide policy under development, and Budget Change Proposals.
- May 24th—Chris Fernandez (State Water Board HR Chief) and other HR key staff will be meeting with the Regional Water Board’s Executive team to discuss consolidation of HR services at the State Water Board.
- May 25th—The Binational Technical Committee for the New River/Mexicali Sanitation Program will be meeting in Mexicali and conducting the bi-monthly Observation Tour of the New River in Mexicali. The IBWC will host the meeting. The main issue to be discussed during the meetings is the problems with the sewage infrastructure in Mexicali and putting together a project to eliminate the bypasses of raw sewage from Mexicali into the New River. Chair Wright, Frank Gonzalez, and Jose Angel will be attending the meeting.